



Class

242.35

Book

D289

C.2

General Theological Seminary Library

CHELSEA SQUARE, NEW YORK

PRESENTED BY

The Rev. William C. Hicks







PERSONAL PROGRESS  
IN RELIGION



# PERSONAL PROGRESS IN RELIGION

BY  
THOMAS FREDERICK DAVIES  
BISHOP OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

CEN. THEO. SEMINARY  
LIBRARY  
NEW YORK

MOREHOUSE PUBLISHING CO.  
MILWAUKEE.  
A. R. MOWBRAY & CO.  
LONDON

109391

242,35~

D289

C2

COPYRIGHT BY  
MOREHOUSE PUBLISHING CO.,  
1925

MAJORS CMT 1030  
YRASHLL  
X20Y W304



TO MY FOUR EARLIEST FRIENDS,  
JOHN CADWALADER, JR.,  
JOHN NORMAN HENRY,  
JOHN SARGENT NEWBOLD,  
AND CHARLES SINKLER,  
OF PHILADELPHIA.



## CONTENTS

- I. INTEREST IN RELIGION.
- II. DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION.
- III. THE MEANING OF RELIGION.
- IV. UNSATISFYING ORGANIZED RELIGION.
- V. UNSATISFYING PERSONAL RELIGION.
- VI. PROGRESS IN RELIGION.
- VII. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.
- VIII. KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (continued).
- IX. WORSHIP OF GOD.
- X. SERVICE OF GOD.
- XI. SPHERES OF SERVICE.
- XII. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGION.



## I.

### INTEREST IN RELIGION

IT IS FAR too frequently assumed that this is a godless day and generation. That this age has its disquieting symptoms, is true; probably every age has had such. It is also true that many persons, young and old, are not wholly satisfied by religion as they experience it. Perhaps it is a divine discontent. At any rate, in the very common longing for something better, lies a boundless hope. There is a vast number of earnest people who are feeling for a religion that will really redeem the world and satisfy their souls. Christianity claims to be and is that religion. The trouble is that Christianity is so differently understood and so indifferently practised. The hope of the world lies, not only in making more Christians, but also in making better Christians. When one looks into one's own



experience, or enters intimately and sympathetically into the lives of other men and women, it becomes evident how beset with difficulties such improvement is. It is with personal progress in the Christian Religion that this book is concerned.

During the "No Popery" riots, Delphine, the clown, thinking to make himself popular, scrawled upon his house, "No Religion." Few people could truthfully do that. In an Australian census the question was asked, "What is your religion?" To this some put down the answer, "£.s.d."—pounds, shillings, and pence. Almost everyone has some religion, even if it be of an inadequate kind. Religion is a constant fact, and men are, and always have been, interested in it. The earth is dotted with churches, temples, shrines, or their remains. The newspapers report all matters of interest to the public, and a large part of their space is devoted to religious news. There is undoubtedly a multitude of people who are not connected with any religious body; but separation from organized religion does not necessarily mean, and in

fact often does not mean, lack of interest in religion itself.

Everyone is interested in life. At times even the most unthinking of us are given to speculate about it. We moralize and wonder. The vast literature on the meaning of life carries us into poetry, drama, philosophy, science; whence, with Omar, we may likely come out by the same door wherein we went. The fact is, it is hard to have any understanding of life without taking religion into account. If life is to have true value and right object, it must be regarded in its relation to God.

This relation of human life to God is exactly what constitutes religion. It is tragic that we have managed to make the expression of religion so lacking in interest to many people, for religion is interesting in itself. Many persons, perhaps, are more interested in it than they themselves are aware. But it remains true that many are distressed by their own apparent lack of interest and lack of progress. It is easy to imagine a man in such a case as this: brought up in the Christian Church, a

member of it, a worshipper in it, a supporter of it, perhaps even an officer in it. He was taught the usual things. He has the greatest respect for religion, and is conscious that he owes much to it. He is a busy man and rarely reads a religious book, not because he does not care to, but because such things do not seem to come in his way, or because his mind is too much absorbed by other things. Very occasionally he reads his Bible. Frankly, it does not interest him much. He cannot force himself to a degree of piety that he does not feel.

At times he experiences a sense of dissatisfaction, as though he were somehow missing the real secret. He asks himself why, since he values and respects religion, he is not more keenly interested in it, and why he does not make more progress. He has been really interested at times. He has passed through experiences, which are very sacred and precious parts of his life, but they are only parts. Religion seems at best an important department of life, and at other times as something superimposed.

It possesses for him no absorbing interest or enthusiasm. In certain moods it appears as a rather irksome duty, involving a lot of bothers, and not at all as interest, strength, comfort, and joy.

There are times of humiliation and times of exaltation. Some sin, some anxiety, some trouble or grief, brings him earnestly to his knees. Enthusiasms come and go. Times of inspiration and nearness to God are not lacking. Now and then some personality, some book, some sermon, some deed, lights up for the moment what the Gospel can mean in a human life.

The years pass, and he goes on in his respectable, honourable, orthodox, more or less useful way, yet it seems strange to him that he is not more vitally interested, for to the first Christians religion was evidently an absorbing thing; and strange too that he does not seem to make more progress, for he can truthfully say that he cannot see that he is any further advanced in his understanding or practice of religion than he was ten years ago. He has come to a sort of religious stand-still.

If one put these questions to one's acquaintances, the answers are various. One says, "The man is too selfish: that is the trouble!" Another says, "He has not caught the divine spark!" Probably there is truth in both these answers, but there is nothing in them that will greatly help the man himself. He does not want to be selfish, and he does want to know how to get the divine spark that will kindle his whole being. We must try to think more deeply and definitely in order to search out some ways by which interest may be quickened and progress attained. So it appears necessary, first of all, to inquire what religion is. The old conception or misconception of it as a means of getting to heaven was neither a very noble nor satisfactory one, for religion goes on beyond that. Yet there was truth in it too, for we must have a religion of redemption. It must contain the offer of salvation. But we must think of religion in terms of today as well as in terms of eternity, as the way of realizing one's best self now, of making one's greatest contribution to God and



man, of coming into present union with God.

When a subject has any real depth, interest grows with knowledge of it. Nothing possesses more real and intense interest than religion. He, who tells rightly of it, "cometh unto you with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner." Human lives are interesting things. Our own careers and destinies are interesting to us. And what can possess more interest than that Supreme Being whom we call God?

If we can once arrive at a satisfactory understanding of religion, it may be possible to see wherein our own religion falls short. If we can strengthen the weak element, develop the neglected part, it may be that interest and progress will come. As interest deepens, love will grow and activity increase, for—

"To business that we love we rise betime  
And go to it with delight."

It is at least well worth while to examine the elements of religion and the ways of its expression. In the Revised Version of

the Psalter, the fifth verse of the eighty-fourth psalm is this: "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the high ways to Zion." Let us seek to find and follow some of the high ways that lead to a fuller realization of the religion of Christ.

## II.

### DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION

EVEN THE BIBLE does not help us directly about the definition, for the word *religion* does not appear at all in the Old Testament, and but five times in the New Testament. The definition of St. James at once comes to mind: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." St. James  
1. 26, 27.

St. James plainly meant to show that no external acts or forms of worship could take the place of an active and practical charity, but he certainly did not mean to deny the obligation of worship.

A fillip is given to one's interest by find-

ing that there is a classic dispute as to the derivation of the word *religion*. Our word comes, of course, from the Latin *religio*. In his *De Natura Deorum*,<sup>3</sup> Cicero derives this from *relegere*, to gather together, or collect again. This would make the primary meaning of the word *religion* to be the careful pondering of divine things. To this derivation Dr. Andrews, of Latin Lexicon fame, inclines. But Lactantius,<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine,<sup>5</sup> and others, all derive it from *religare*, to bind back; and the Century Dictionary thinks that the common modern view agrees with theirs. This derivation makes religion primarily to mean the bond which binds us to God. Canon Liddon seems to incline toward the former derivation as probably etymologically correct, but thinks that the latter better expresses the broad, popular sense of the word: "Religion consists fundamentally in the practical recognition of a constraining bond between the inward life of man and an unseen Person."<sup>6</sup>

In what does this bond consist?

Here interest further increases, for

about this there has been an even greater difference of opinion than about the derivation. Try another experiment on your acquaintances, and ask what their conceptions of religion are. One of them will be sure to reply, "To be good, that's the main thing!" Another will vary that by saying, "To do good!" Still another will answer, "To know the truth!" And probably one will say, "To go to church!"

It would be easily possible and not without interest to give a long list of definitions of religion, and we must consider some of them. In them you will find the varying emphasis of your friends repeated.

Martineau said: "By Religion I understand the belief and worship of Supreme Mind and Will, directing the universe and holding moral relations with human life." This is not unlike the Scholastic definition, which is, "*Religio est modus cognoscendi et colendi Deum*"; Religion is the way of knowing and worshipping God.

Both include knowledge and worship. When Sir John Seeley proposed the study



of science as the subject matter of religion, he too recognized the function of the intellect. Kant insisted upon the necessary employment of the will and emphasized morality as the essential thing. Religion, as he conceived it, consists in our recognizing all our duties as divine commandments.<sup>8</sup> Schleiermacher<sup>9</sup> and Matthew Arnold<sup>10</sup> added the emotional element and put the emphasis on feeling. Cardinal Newman's definition is, "By Religion I mean the knowledge of God, of his Will, and of our duties towards him."<sup>11</sup> The author of *Faiths of the World* comes back to worship; "Religion is the communion between a worshipping subject and a worshipped object—the communion of a man with what he believes to be a god<sup>12</sup>."

In this brief review it strikes one that the functions of the intellect, the feelings, and the will, are all variously emphasized. Some make one essential, and some another. Why should not religion be something for the whole man, something which requires all his powers? If so, in what ways are they employed?

Dr. Philander K. Cady, sometime professor in the General Theological Seminary, arrived at this definition: "Religion is the knowledge of God, both intellectual and experimental; the worship of God, outward and ceremonial as it must be, but also intrinsically and preëminently in spirit and in truth; and the service of God, as the surrender and consecration of the whole man, body, mind, and spirit, to obedience to God's Will."<sup>13</sup> Or, in shorter form, "Religion is heart-knowledge, heart-worship, and heart-service, of God."<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Cady's conception of religion agrees with the famous definition given by Canon Liddon: "Religion is the sacred bond, freely accepted, generously, enthusiastically, persistently welcomed, whereby the soul engages to make a continuous expenditure of its highest powers in attaching itself to the Personal Source and Object of its being. It is the tie by which the soul binds itself to God, its true friend. To be thus bound to a person is to cherish strong, nay, passionate feelings towards him; it

is to seek to know all that can be known about his wishes and character, and to register this knowledge in exact terms; it is to obey scrupulously all that is clearly ascertained to be his will". Thus Liddon, too, includes feeling, knowledge, and service in religion. Anyone who desires to find this subject more fully and ably discussed can go to no better place than the first lecture in Canon Liddon's *Some Elements of Religion*.

Out of all this there evolves our working definition, which is: Religion is the functioning of the whole nature of man, intellect, feeling, and will, in knowing, worshipping, and serving God.

### III.

## THE MEANING OF RELIGION

A LITTLE REFLECTION will lead us to see that the three functions of religion, knowing, worshipping, serving, are all necessary to a perfect whole. We must know the truth. Our Lord attached a high value to knowledge: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." St. John XVII. 3. Since we have hearts as well as minds, there cannot be a satisfying religion without feeling; and feeling towards God finds its natural expression in worship. A religion without morality, without a sense of personal and social responsibility, would be far from satisfactory. Out of the consciousness of moral responsibility comes the service of God.

It is possible to test the validity of this conception in at least three ways.

Whatever religion is, it is so great a thing that it must be something for the whole nature of man. Every power of the mind, every noble thought, must find a home in it; every pure and intense longing, aspiration, and love, a worthy object; and all the strength of the will, a sphere for its exercise. Doubtless the whole nature of man is engaged in each function of religion. For instance, we must serve with understanding and love as well as with will. But see how our definition works out! Our intellect is employed primarily in the knowledge of God. Our affections find their natural expression in the worship of God. Our will gives an ethical character to religion and is engaged in the service of God. Religion, so understood, requires the whole man, and becomes identified with life. This is the supreme test, whether our religion be something added to our life as an ornament, a duty, a comfort, or whether it be wrought into life itself. "Life and religion are one, or neither is anything: I will not say neither is growing to be anything. Religion is no way of



life, no show of life, no observance of any sort. It is neither the food nor medicine of being. It is life essential.”<sup>16</sup>

The second test is this. If you will go to the administrative headquarters of any considerable religious body, and examine the manifestations of activity which are there organized and directed, you will find that there are always three main departments, Education, Missions, and Social Service. Of course these activities cannot be wholly separated nor shut up in air-tight compartments. No hard and fast line can be drawn between them, for in so many ways they overlap and merge into one another. But, generally speaking, the object of all religious education is the knowledge of God. The purpose of Missions, while it necessarily includes the knowledge and service of God, is primarily to lead men to worship the one true God, while the service of his brethren, according to our Lord, is service of himself. With this conception of religion an even richer meaning seems to come into so many beautiful things. There is the

Micah  
VI. 8.

Prophet Micah's great description of the requirements of God, which Huxley so admired: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" What are to do justly and to love mercy but another name for the service of God? To humble thyself to walk with thy God, as it reads in the Hebrew, includes the humility, the companionship, the intimate communion, which belong to the knowledge and worship of God. Our Lord himself was the embodiment of life and religion. He gave no greater description of himself than in those unforgettable words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." To walk in the way of worship, to seek and find the truth in knowledge, and to live the life of service, is religion.

St. John  
XIV. 6.

The third test is experience. As one lives with this conception, it seems more and more to satisfy. Religion never lacks in interest, for, so understood, it is no synonym for church-going, or ecclesiastical allegiance, or theology, or moral duty, or phil-

anthropy, or emotional enthusiasm; it is life, and there is always some advance to make. Religion is a glorious thing, a living thing, an absorbing thing, calling upon the whole of a man for his highest, and strongest, and best.

#### IV.

### UNSATISFYING ORGANIZED RELIGION.

IT MUST frankly be confessed that the world is full of imperfect expressions of religion, as full as it is of unsatisfactory definitions of it. These imperfect manifestations and incomplete expressions are two of the principal reasons why the splendour of religion is so often clouded, its romance wholly missed, and interest in it lessened.

Some do not think it matters to what Church they belong. What does matter in their opinion is how they live up to the standards of that Church. Nevertheless it is important to belong to the right body of organized religion. I mean by this, that body which is right, or most nearly right, in itself; others might mean that which is right for a particular man. All Churches

may have the same God, but some of them present very partial aspects of him, and very untrue conceptions of him. Some may possess more direct and surer ways of access to him than others, represent him more authoritatively, and hold the truth in purer form. But this is not intended to be a controversial book. Its purpose is not to convert anyone to that branch of Christ's Church to which the author belongs. It means to deal with the question in the large. And what are the facts? It is undoubtedly true that one religious body may appeal strongly to our emotions, another to our intellect, and neither touch our will. One may be all social service, another all doctrine, and neither maintain the real principle of worship. Self-preservation alone would lead one to seek an adequate embodiment of religion, for in time of stress many a man has found to his sorrow that his form of organized religion could give him neither the support nor the shelter that he needed: "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the

Isaiah  
XXVIII. 20.

covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it."

If one should feel his form of organized religion to be unsatisfactory, one should look to see what essential component is lacking. It may be that he can introduce or strengthen the neglected element. This is to bring his power to bear within his own religious body, to try to make it more perfect because of his membership in it. This course would have avoided so many schisms in the Church.

Sometimes men feel it necessary to change to some other branch. It is a serious thing to leave one's form of organized religion, to which so many sacred ties bind one. Like entering the holy estate of matrimony, the changing of one's ecclesiastical allegiance ought not to be made unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God. It may, however, be right to do so; for, while it is a serious thing to change our form of organized religion, it is a more serious thing to have our religion unable to change us. Let me confess



to an example of what came near being most unsatisfying religion in my own ministry. In October, 1918, I tried to preach to some men of the 104th regiment, lying under some bushes on a hillside somewhere between Verdun and the Argonne. I knew they were going into the trenches that night, and a very real feeling of unworthiness tied my tongue. Who was I to preach to men who were going into what they were! And so I spoke general words of comfort and cheer, and gave them messages from home. One of them crawled nearer to me and said, "Some of us will not come back tonight." That was all he said. Then, with all the earnestness that is in me, I preached unto them Christ and him crucified. It was the only thing they wanted. We must have a religion that can satisfy our souls.

If it be necessary and right to change our form of organized religion, there are certain things to keep in mind. One cannot accept the New Testament and doubt that our Lord founded a Church. He appointed officers in it and gave them cer-

tain authority. He instituted sacraments which that Church was to maintain. He sent his Holy Spirit to dwell in it. He promised that the gates of hell should not prevail against it. He provided in it a special way of coming to him. He intended it to be one and universal, and not split up into contending sects. We must ask ourselves which, then, is the Church most nearly like the Church which Christ founded, which most fully expresses and imparts his life, and which is the best instrument he has for the salvation of the world? One sees things to admire in this religious body and that. The quiet mysticism and repose of one, the good works and zeal of another, the liberality of a third, the definiteness of a fourth, the stately ritual of still another, appeal to one; but it is a larger question than any of these. Which branch of his Church most fully carries out our Lord's intention, which best expresses the whole mind of Christ, which preserves all the elements of true religion?

To the majority of men, I fancy, their

form of organized religion comes by inheritance. They do not question its validity, and yet they do not wholly accept its system. This is the great and general mistake, to accept our form of religion at less than its full value, not to be faithful to the light we have. However true our Church may be, we shall still be unsatisfied if we enter it only half way, picking and choosing those parts of its life, and ordinances, and discipline, which we think appeal to us, and refusing the rest. This is a frequent cause of dissatisfaction in religion.

Of course our interest, satisfaction, happiness, and comfort in our own parish church will vary somewhat with the character, ability, and personality of our pastor. That is inevitable. It is impossible to keep personality wholly out of it. But the stronger and more perfect one's personal religion is, the less will it be affected by changing conditions. After all it is the Church that matters more than the minister, and the communion with God more than the choir.

## V.

### UNSATISFYING PERSONAL RELIGION.

IN CAPTAIN SPEKE'S TRAVELS, he tells of an exploring trip in West Africa and of his giving to all of his half-naked native porters goat-skin cloaks to protect them from the autumnal rains. So proud were they of their new cloaks that they wore them every day beneath the sweltering sun; but when it rained each negro rolled up his cloak and tucked it under his arm. A fair weather or ornamental religion, which neither faces nor shelters from the storms of life, can never satisfy. Neither is there anything very exhilarating about that type which Richard Baxter so aptly termed "wheel-barrow religion," which goes only when it is pushed.

There is a vast amount of one-sided religion, which is almost always unsatisfy-

ing. One man is active in good works, but never worships. Another worships, but worships ignorantly. Still another knows much theology, but does little good. Many a one might take to himself our Lord's saying to the young man: "One thing thou lackest!" Some of us are like Ephraim, whom the Prophet Hosea described as "a cake not turned," good on one side, but on the other raw, sodden, imperfect. And some of us in our personal religion may be not unlike the man of whom Dr. Samuel Johnson said, "That fellow seems to me to possess but one idea, and that is a wrong one." A religion solely of the intellect is a cold and unsatisfying thing, which can neither warm the heart nor kindle the life. Strangely enough it fails chiefly in attaining the knowledge of God. St. Augustine tried that way in Manichæism and it led him nowhere. In the Epistles of St. Paul he learned his mistake. In Louis Bertrand's *Saint Augustin*, is this sentence: "*L'Apôtre enseignait à Augustin qu'il ne suffit pas d'entrevoir Dieu à travers le cristal des*

St. Mark  
X. 21.

Hosea  
VII. 8.

*concepts, mais qu'il faut, en esprit et en vérité, s'unir à Lui.'"* An older statement of the same truth exists in the sixth beatitude, that it is the pure in heart who shall see God.

St. Matt.  
V. 8.

Or, let us suppose a man's religion consists solely in good works. He may be a professional welfare worker, whose whole life is spent in service. That is no guarantee that his character may not be unlovely and his personality harsh and ungente. We have always before us the elder brother of the Prodigal Son. True religion ought to transform a man, make him, as Charles Kingsley said, "a more thorough gentleman than all the courts of Europe. \* \* \* Such a man was Abraham of old,—a plain man, dwelling in tents, helping to tend his own cattle, fetching in the calf from the field himself, and dressing it for the guests with his own hands, but still, as the children of Heth said of him, a mighty prince, not merely in wealth of flocks and herds, but a prince in heart." One remembers the great title that was given him, by which he is still



spoken of in the East, "and he was called the Friend of God." St. James  
II. 23

Consider a more extreme case, of service without knowledge. I used to possess a stone idol or fetish, made by a Hopi Indian. An infinite amount of service went into its making. The Indian took the trouble to obtain gold-bearing quartz. He had no steel or iron tools, but produced his result by a long, slow process of chipping and rubbing. Very likely he did the best he could in his religion. It is touching, and it is also sad, that he did not have a truer knowledge of God. We should call his religion unsatisfying, and I fancy it was so to him.

Not infrequently one sees a religion which emphasizes worship, but lacks in service. The sacrifice of Cain and the Pharisee's prayer are cases in point. Neither was acceptable to God.

I have been trying to illustrate disproportionate, unbalanced, imperfect religion. Let us take one more example. This man is a good citizen, generous and charitable, a hard worker, admirable in ser-

vice; but he never enters a church, and utterly neglects worship. He says he can read his Bible more profitably at home. If he does so read, he ought to realize that public worship is enjoined in the Scriptures. The Jews and Greeks needed to learn that God's presence is not limited to his Temples: our generation needs rather to learn that there is a special presence of God in united worship, "for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "There am I," interpreted Bishop Walsham How, "in special love and favour; there am I with special gifts and graces; there am I, listening, loving, blessing!"<sup>18</sup> To forsake common worship is to miss the sense of union and the strength which union brings. No lonely, individual religion can take the place of corporate religion, any more than corporate religion can take the place of personal religion. In his *Life of Wesley*,<sup>19</sup> Southey writes: "Sometime before John Wesley's return to the University, he had travelled many miles to see what is called 'a serious man.' This

St. Matt.  
XVIII. 20.

person said to him, 'Sir, you wish to serve God and go to heaven. Remember, you cannot serve him alone; you must therefore find companions or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.' Wesley never forgot these words." We need to be often on our knees, but we need also the men and women and little children kneeling next us. We need to join in great volumes of prayer and choruses of praise. We need "the tie that binds" and the realization of the word "our" in the Lord's Prayer. If our personal religion lack fellowship, we shall miss great blessing. An incident recorded in the Gospel must have caused much subsequent self-reproach: "But Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came." He missed this special manifestation of our Lord. We both give and get by joining in public worship.

An incomplete religion is like a disorder. It may be interesting to the specialist to diagnose and treat, but it is likely to be highly unsatisfactory to its possessor.

St. John  
XX. 24.

## VI.

### PROGRESS IN RELIGION.

WHEN WE HONESTLY think over what our own personal religion amounts to, our conclusions are often disheartening; the result seems so inglorious, so ineffectual against our own weaknesses, so useless to our neighbors, so powerless in a difficult world. Life has been called "a comedy to him who thinks, a tragedy to him who feels, and a victory to him who believes." Our problem is how to turn our life and religion into victory. What would that mean? Not so much a triumph at the end as victorious progress all along. Of course there would be some failures and defeats, but on the whole there would be appreciable advance. Victory would consist in instance after instance of conquering, small though each conquest might be. Such victorious progress is possible for the Chris-

tian. That is the glorious and inspiring thing. Constant advance is implied in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul spoke of the possibility of our growing up into Christ in all things, and thanked God for giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph. IV. 15.  
I. Cor.  
XV. 57.

What, then, are the two things that we need for victorious progress? First, God. And God is "not far from every one of us." Second, the realization and the perfecting of our union with him, by fuller and more intimate knowledge of him, by truer and purer worship of him, by more faithful service of him. So will the whole of our being respond to the drawing of God, and our whole nature grow into union with his divine nature. Our personal religion, like some great tree, will strike deeper root in earth, reach up to loftier heights, spread wider boughs in protection of every kindly and beneficent thing, bear blossoms of beauty and fruits of blessing, and respond to the sun and rain and winds of God by growing in strength and worth and glory.

Acts  
XVII. 27.

It belongs both to our duty and to our advantage to make progress in our religion. If there be no progress, there will be little interest. We are seldom greatly interested in anything in which we have come to a stand-still. So many jobs are given up because the worker feels that he has gone as far as he can, and the rest will be merely marking time or holding the ground already won. The man loses interest in his work because he ceases to advance. The hardest and least inspiring way to make one's living is in those occupations that involve a deadly monotony. The tragedy of middle age is often a sort of religious standing still. It has neither the energy nor the hope of youth, nor the calm and resignation of age. By middle life one has acquired a mass of prejudices, and these too tend to bar progress. We need to be more adventurous in our religion, more open to fresh ideas, and more willing to experiment in new directions.

Progress is important also because it is a sign of life. Lack of exercise leads to muscular atrophy. The arm that will not



move, at last cannot move. In biology, stagnation spells death. There is danger of that in religion also, for the whole idea of normal religion breathes growth. Everything is to be utilized to that end. The valley of Baca is to be used as a well to refresh the traveller towards Zion. Our very failures are to be made stepping-stones. Normal religion is to go from strength to strength. Preëminently is this true of the Christian Religion. Many of the functions ascribed to God the Holy Spirit have to do with advance. He creates and gives life. He directs, teaches, leads, strengthens, enables, communicates, imparts, reveals, guides into all truth. All these have to do with going on. Some of his emblems are things of motion, as fire and wind. Of such activity must be every one that is born of the Spirit. The very word *spirit* has become a synonym for vivacity, alacrity, energy. Isaiah puts this activity of religion succinctly: "This is the way, walk ye in it." He did not say: "This is the way, sit ye beside it." A favorite symbol for a Christian is a pilgrim. It de-

Psalm  
LXXXIV.  
6.

Isaiah  
XXX. 21.

notes his constant advance. One of the great words of the Religion of Christ is the word "Go"! It lies at the root of the Mission of God the Son, of the Mission of God the Holy Spirit, and of the marching orders of our Lord's great commission to us.

St. Matt.  
XXVIII.  
19.

Most of all, progress is necessary for this: if religion truly mean knowing God, worshipping God, and serving God, we must keep ever advancing into closer and more perfect union with him. If, in the three-fold tie that binds us to God, one strand be weak or frayed, let us remedy that imperfection. If the strand of knowledge be insufficient, let us strengthen that. If worship be scant, let us supply that. If service be faulty, let us amend that. To strengthen that element or those elements, whose incompleteness lessens the adequacy of the whole, seems a practical and sensible way to proceed. This may seem to some too mechanical a method. That may very well be, and yet in matters of religion the frequent trouble is that we are not practical enough.

## VII.

### KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

IN ST. PAUL'S second letter to St. Timothy, written from close confinement, when he saw the time of his martyrdom drawing near, he requested Timothy to come to him and to bring him the cloak that he had left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, and especially the parchments. That is very affecting in its suggestion of St. Paul's desire to use his last hours in study and in spiritual progress. One of the lessons of the difficult parable of the Unjust Steward undoubtedly is that we should make good use of our intellects. And that is exactly what we so commonly fail to do in the Christian life. To advance in all other things, we know that we must study; but when it comes to religion, we treat it casually and at hazard, assuming that understanding of

II. Tim.  
IV. 13

it will somehow come to us. Whenever there is a controversy in the Church, one has only to listen to the comments of various people to see how very slight their knowledge of religious matters is. Trained educators believe that comparatively few habitual church-goers could pass an elementary examination in religious subjects. This wide-spread ignorance constitutes one of the principal bars to religious progress. To quote Canon Liddon again: "Religion is impossible without some knowledge of its object; and our capacities for true religious life must, to a certain extent, vary with our varying degrees of religious knowledge."<sup>21</sup>

Indeed why should our knowledge grow, for of what does the average person's reading consist? Of some magazines, some novels and biographies, but principally of the newspaper. It reminds one of the good parson in England who took pity on an illiterate old man, and with much trouble taught him to read that he might have the comfort of his Bible. After a time the clergyman met the old man's wife and en-

quired how her husband got on with his Bible. "Bless you, Sir!" she replied, "he was out of the Bible and into the newspaper long ago!" So many of us are like that, out of all religious reading and into the newspaper!

Reading is undoubtedly one great means of increasing our knowledge, but it is far from being the only way. Can one know God? The Agnostic replies, No; the Christian says, Yes. David's words to Solomon remain true: "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee." Every human heart has joined at times in Job's longing cry: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" The knowledge of God comes to no two souls in exactly the same way. "It is the great adventure," wrote Canon Mason, "the great romance of every soul—this finding of God."<sup>22</sup> What seems hardest for us to grasp, is that to know God requires effort. Even human friends are not won by wishing. There must be advances made, correspondence, communion, the effort to understand, expressions of friendship, re-

I. Chron.  
XXVIII. 9.

Job  
XXIII. 3

flection, confidence, and always sacrifice. It always requires sacrifice to gain knowledge. Benjamin Franklin, living on half his board-money to save the other half for books, illustrates but one type.

Let us consider, then, some of the ways of gaining knowledge of God; and, first of all, the greatest way. If one would know God, one must strive to know Jesus Christ. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." What Jesus Christ is, God is: "for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily": that must be the key to our knowledge. But how shall we come really to know the Christ? There are many avenues of approach: let us consider six.

I. The Holy Bible. The Bible is not the only book by which we can advance in the knowledge of God, but I take it as being supremely the greatest. The Scriptures are not God, but in them one can hear God's voice, which speaks ever freshly and intimately to us. By hearkening to

St. John  
XIV., 6,  
7.

Col.  
II. 9.



that divine voice, and especially to that gentle voice in the Gospels, we come to know him whose voice it is. Still, by the Bible, you say, we cannot see God! But I can know a man very well whom I have never seen. I think I know a man with whom I have corresponded by letter, and into whose character, thoughts, views, purposes, and beliefs I have gained an insight, better than the familiar newsboy whom I see every day in the street. Sight is not everything. Has an intelligent blind man no intimate friends? In reading the Bible I sometimes think of the story of those strange friendships between prisoners in the Bastille. By raps on the dividing wall, their histories, hopes, fears, and plans were slowly spelled out, and thus heart-felt friendships were formed between unmet, unseen friends.

It is a great help to have a rule about reading the Scriptures, so much to be read every day. It is also a good plan to select one book, a short one at first. Then, to read the text carefully and thoughtfully through. To follow that, by studying

it with the help of a modern and sound commentary, so that one gets to know the setting, the purpose and exegesis. To gather one's prayers around it; to keep it in mind; to think of it; feed on it; live with it. At last there will be one place in the Bible we know intimately and thoroughly. It will have come to mean vastly more to us. We shall have gained in knowledge of God.

As we read, we shall strive to understand God's purpose; to grasp what it is he wants to do, and to have done in the world; to find the meaning he finds in life; to see, as it were, with his eyes. As we come to know the printed pages of that book, down underneath the words we shall come to know God. If Christianity were merely a natural religion, it could perhaps be understood solely by experience; one could grow into it. But as it is more than that, as it is a revealed religion, based upon a revelation, it must be learned. If we want to know the real George Washington, we read his recorded speeches, his letters, his diary, the biog-

raphies of him. We go to the men who have studied his life, to historians, professors, librarians. We read the writings of the men who were closely associated with him. Just so the Bible takes us into the company of men who have been close to God, who have communed with him, interpreted him, acted as his spokesmen and agents. In it we can build altars with Jacob and catch with him the vision of that ladder reaching to heaven. We can stand in spirit with Elijah on Mount Carmel as alone he champions the true God. We can go with St. Paul on his journeys for Christ, and accompany John the Divine into his exile in Patmos. We are brought into the fellowship of men who lived with the Christ. Above all, we can listen to him who spake as never man spake; listen to him praying and teaching; seek with him communion with his Father and ours. The great thing to do is to steep oneself in the life of Christ. Theories of the degree of inspiration, matters of criticism, questions of science, ought not to hinder us. If we feel that any of these must be settled

first, by all means let us go for them. Only let us beware of that pernicious thing, a little knowledge. O Popular Science, what crimes are committed in thy name! Religion owes much to science and philosophy and psychology. The sum of our knowledge is steadily growing. But what we are after now is the spiritual meaning of the Holy Scriptures, and it is there, ready for us to find.

II. Prayer. It is hard to put into words how we may come to know God through prayer, for the knowledge comes in so many ways, subjective and objective. It is one of those things that can be understood far better through experience than from description. But it is a fact that prayer is a very real way to knowledge of God. A learned man once said, "I have learned more theology on my knees than from my books." It was when he went into the sanctuary to pray that the troubled Psalmist saw the working of God's purpose. It was when he went up upon the house-top to pray that St. Peter saw heaven open, and heard the divine voice.

Ps.  
LXXIII. 17.

Acts  
X., 9-13.

Preliminary to all prayer should be an act of realization of God's presence. Out of the deep of our human spirit we reach up into the deep of God. We come into conscious touch with the Infinite. We speak to God, believing that he hears. We pour out ourselves before him, all our wants, weaknesses, sins, hopes, fears, desires. We spread everything before our divine Friend. As we pray, we escape to some degree from the domination of sense and delusion, and come into the presence of Reality. We feel our dependence upon God. Our mind, to use Isaiah's phrase, is stayed upon God. We hold communion with him, and enter upon a certain intimacy with him, a close relationship. "If I live a life of prayer," says the author of *The Daily Round*, "I am never by myself." In the closeness of that association we apprehend, perhaps unconsciously, more of the character of God, feeling what we may and what we may not ask him. We believe too that God answers though we do not always wait to listen to him. We cannot doubt the subjective ef-

XXVI. 3.

fect of prayer. We know that it reacts upon our personality, that it energizes and transfigures. Neither can we doubt its objective effect. We have only to look at our Lord's earthly life to see the power that came to him through prayer. Somebody once said that our Lord might have been defeated if he could have been kept from praying. Indeed we have only to look into our own lives to realize that things have come to us from God through prayer,—forgiveness, strength, comfort, guidance, blessing.

Without doubt a great part of our knowledge of our friends comes to us through conversation. We come to know God, reverently be it said, through conversing with him. It was not so very long ago that Edison discovered that we could send telegraphic messages on the same wire in opposite directions at the same time. In the constantly passing communications between earth and heaven there comes to us knowledge of God.

One main reason why we do not come to know God better through prayer is that



we so persist in belittling it. "We suffer," says E. Herman, "from arrested development in prayer."<sup>23</sup> It is our too common mental habit to limit prayer to petition, forgetting that it includes also intercession, adoration, praise, and thanksgiving. To quote *The Daily Round* again: "In much true prayer nothing is asked." We go some way in our Lord's own Prayer before we ask anything for ourselves. The first part is all about God, his Name, his kingdom, his will. We believe that our Lord gave us that prayer as a model for all our prayers. The thing that we most need to do is to instil into our prayers more of the spirit of that first part. The asking of God to supply our needs is indeed important, but we must strive to come to such a mind that "petition will no longer be the pivot upon which prayer turns. The true motive power will now be to get nearer to God, to know Him better, to experience His friendship, to enter more fully into His thoughts and purposes."<sup>24</sup>

## VIII.

### KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (CONTINUED)

III. MEDITATION. To draw the line between prayer and meditation is difficult. Both are ways of communing with God. In some sense prayer includes meditation, which has indeed been called "the prayer of mystical devotion." And yet there is a difference between them, for more people pray than practise meditation. To state the distinction roughly, prayer is speaking to God: meditation is listening to him. There can of course be wordless prayer. In the little book called *Brother Lawrence*, the beautiful sub-title is *The Practice of the Presence of God*. That might be taken as a definition of either prayer or meditation. The meditation that leads to knowledge of God is this: "In it we listen rather than talk; we wait to hear what God has to tell us, es-

pecially we wait for indications of his will, to be told what it is he wants us to do in his service; what message he wants us to bear; what bit of work he wants us to do; or again, what new truth he wants us to learn about himself.’<sup>25</sup>

Meditation requires strong effort. An excellent little book, called *Christian Morals*, describes it as “the concentration of the mind as it revolves around a central thought, considering it and applying it in all its manifold bearings,”<sup>26</sup> and it must be a whole-souled concentration. “Meditate upon these things,” wrote St. Paul to St. Timothy, and, he added, “give thyself wholly to them.”

I. Tim.  
IV. 15

Why should we practise meditation? It can be an immense force in our life. From it there flow into the soul serenity, calm, poise, strength, peace. It is of inestimable value to have quiet times for thinking things out in God’s presence, but the point we must seize upon now is that by meditation we grow in knowledge of God. When one greatly desires to know some person better, one welcomes the op-

portunity to be alone with him, to have him for a time all to oneself. Meditation is being alone with God. Some, like Brother Lawrence, can attain this in the midst of many distractions. Most realize it in solitude and privacy. Meditation can hardly yield its proper fruit save as a regular and persistent practice. There must be a time sacredly devoted to it, a watch to be kept. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer." There it all is—the regular going apart, the listening to God, the response! We shall come down from our watch with a more intimate knowledge of him.

Hab.  
II. 1.

IV. The Church. The New Testament is a collection of inspired documents written for the Christian Church. The Church came into being before the most important part of the Bible, yet the Bible has been put first in this list because in it all essential Christian doctrine is found. The Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, is the teacher and interpreter of that doc-

trine. Without the help of the Church, it would be hard for the individual to arrive at a balanced and proportionate apprehension of revealed truth. This is true for three principal reasons.

First, because of the divine nature of the Church. According to St. Paul, the Church is the body of Christ, the living body of which Christ is the living head, and to which he promised divine guidance. If this be so, we should expect to find a certain authority in its teaching. In his letter to Timothy, St. Paul also spoke of the Church of the living God as "the pillar and ground of the truth." Rightly to apprehend the truth, then, we must avail ourselves of the guidance of the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to the Church, as well as to individuals.

Eph.  
I. 23

I. Tim.  
III. 15

Secondly, because we must take into account the collective and common experience of Christian men as the corrective to individual bias; we must learn the deductions from the Holy Scriptures and the Christian life, which they have universally found to be necessary. We must

examine the forms in which they stated and guarded the truth they believed. We must know, not only how those who lived in the company of our blessed Lord, and those who lived when his teachings had been newly given to men, thought and felt and believed, but also we must learn the developments, the progressive steps in knowledge and understanding that men have been able to take. There may always be a human revolt against things set forth by authority; but it will not do to brush lightly aside this or that doctrine as an ecclesiastical appendage to the truth, without giving due weight to the experience of the whole body of believers in Christ.

Thirdly, because the Church is the guardian and administrator of certain things, by the use of which our knowledge of God may be advanced. Let us take, for example, the sacrament of the Holy Communion, with which must always go repentance of sin. In this blessed sacrament, our Lord comes to dwell in our temple in so far as we will open to him. He will



come into the outer court, into the Holy Place, or into the Holy of Holies. But there are barriers that may prevent his entrance, sins that we will not give up, bars to our full reception of him, and so, bars to our perfectly knowing him. It seems evident that we cannot come into perfect communion with him so long as uncharitable and unforgiving tempers, impure thoughts and imaginations, self-indulgences, hatreds, evil habits, dishonesties, lies, are allowed and persisted in. The only thing to do is to break down the barriers, confess and renounce the sin, and welcome the Lord Christ wholly. Then, indeed, he will dwell in us and we in him, and we shall know him as he is. The sacraments are symbolical and memorial acts, intended to illustrate, to emphasize, to put us in mind of certain truths. They are also channels, through which is conveyed into the believing and penitent soul something from without itself. That means the coming into our life of something from God and of God. In Baptism and Confirmation it is the Holy

Spirit: in the Holy Communion it is the glorified humanity of Christ. It is related that one day a courtier found King Henry V. attending the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at an almost deserted side altar in Westminster Abbey, whilst a great crowd filled the nave and hung upon the lips of a popular preacher. The courtier enquired of the King why he was not with the larger congregation: to which the King replied, "I would rather go to meet my Friend, than merely to hear him talked about." That story illustrates just what I am trying to express. In the Holy Communion we go to meet our Friend. He comes to us and dwells in us. We come into union with him, and so come to know him.

V. Good Works. There is a beautiful legend of a man who went out to seek for Christ. In vain he searched through the fields, the royal courts, the markets, and came at last upon blood-stained footprints leading to a miserable hut. There, relieving, comforting, healing, blessing, he found the Christ. Very many have found

that true over and over again in their own experience. One comes back from a work of mercy feeling our Lord very near to one. It is the knowledge of God gained through experience. It is related that when Diogenes heard Zeno with subtle arguments endeavoring to prove that there was no motion, Diogenes suddenly started up and walked. "Hereby I confute you," said he, "and prove that there is motion." Walking with God is one of the best ways of knowing him. To share in his activity, to do his work, is a wonderfully effective way of increasing our knowledge of him. In the account of the miracle at the marriage feast at Cana, the ruler of the feast, when he tasted the water that was made wine, knew not whence it was. And then follow these significant words, "but the servants which drew the water knew." It is they who do the work of Christ, who best come to know Christ, and to understand his purposes and methods. When we minister to the suffering, in some real sense also, we find the Christ in them, for our Lord in a wonderful way

St. John  
II. 9.

St. Matt.  
XXV. 40

identifies himself with sufferers. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." If anyone doubts that, one can only ask him to try it and see. The story of the Russian workman who gave his coat to a freezing man, is not all fable. That night the workman had a dream, in which he seemed to see our Lord standing by him; and in his dream he said to the Saviour, "Why, you have on my coat!" To which our Lord replied, "I was naked, and ye clothed me." It means the coming to know God in the persons of the hungry, naked, sick, and imprisoned.

St. Matt.  
XXV. 36

VI. Personal Holiness. If we would really know God, we must be like him. Canon Peter Green quotes a true, old mystical doctrine: "Only like can know like."<sup>27</sup> We can know God, then, to the extent that we are holy, godly, godlike. This is the moral experience of God, the practical experience of God, the being what he is. Is it likely that while a man's soul is filled with lust, or greed, or hate, he can know God well? He simply cannot under-

stand him at all. Perhaps he can hardly recognize that God exists!

Here, then, are six ways of advancing in the knowledge of God: by study, especially of the Holy Scriptures; by prayer; by meditation; by the Church and her formularies and sacraments; by good works; by personal holiness. These are not all the ways. There are others, some of them beyond our control, such as great joy and great suffering, but which, when they come, can be used to increase our knowledge of God. I have dwelt only upon ways we can always follow; and of each way I have attempted to give only a suggestion. Each one has filled many books. The end of them all is more intimate knowledge, the coming to be what Thomas à Kempis called "very close familiar friends to God."

## IX.

### WORSHIP OF GOD.

THERE SEEM TO BE two common misconceptions about worship. One is that it is a thing that may be practised or dispensed with at our pleasure. On the contrary it is a Christian obligation. Nothing, I think, is more clearly enjoined in the Scriptures. When Satan tempted our Lord to choose a wrong worship, our Lord's reply instantly asserted the obligation of worship and of right worship. The Psalmist over and over again, in glowing language, exhorts to it. The whole of the twenty-fourth and one hundredth psalms are concerned with it. There is nothing nobler in literature than two verses of the hundredth psalm: "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pas-

St. Matt.  
IV. 10

Ps.  
C. 3, 4.



ture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name."

The other common misconception is that worship means the coming to get something. It really means, of course, the exact opposite of that, a coming to give something. It is true that one should, and generally does, receive something, instruction, suggestion, warning, reproof, comfort, inspiration, strength, peace; but the primary object of worship is to give. It is to offer ourselves to God, to give public expression of our belief, loyalty, allegiance, gratitude, love. Our word *worship* is derived from *worth*, the equivalent of honour. So divine worship means the honour paid to Divine Persons, to God.

Worship becomes a habit, and it must always be remembered of those who seldom or never come to church, that non-worship is also a habit, which is exceedingly hard to break. A man makes perhaps the effort to worship, but at first it seems so mechanical and lifeless. The long dis-used pump will not immediately yield the

stream of water. To the man accustomed to worship, it comes easily and naturally. Doubts keep some away from public worship. Men fear lest they be hypocrites in coming. The strange thing is that the cure for doubt often lies in worship itself. The Psalmist could not understand how the wicked could go through this world sneering at God, and yet be so prosperous and so rich. It troubled him mightily. Of what use was it, then, to struggle and to suffer for righteousness? "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." But his feet were almost gone, his steps had well-nigh slipped until he joined in worship! "Until I went into the sanctuary of God," then he understood! So worship steadies a man until he finds his feet. A faulty knowledge of God sometimes keeps people from worship, as Zwingli's doctrine hindered John Stuart Mill. Conversely, a true knowledge of God would lead all men to worship him. When they once catch sight of God's splendour—something so stupendous, so utterly glorious, so beautiful, so holy—

Ps.  
LXXIII.  
13.

Ps.  
LXXIII.  
17.

they cannot help falling on their knees and offering him their homage.

Church-going has a tremendous moral power. A busy physician once said to me, "I am afraid not to go to church." Sunday should be a day of rest, but not of idleness. The truest rest, I believe, lies in worship. Here is something that lifts you out of yourself and fills you with peace. Our Sunday should be an especially happy day, but at the same time a holy day. It will take us into the lovely tabernacles of the Lord of hosts, to the blessed refuge where "the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God!"

Ps.  
LXXXIV.  
3.

St. Paul speaks of the Church as "the household of faith," "the household of God," and it is essentially a household, a home. There is as much or more obligation to go to it as there is to go to our earthly father's house. The ideal parish church would see men and women and children coming into it all hours, bringing their cares and worries and perplexities

Gal.  
VI. 10  
Eph.  
II. 19.

and pains to God. Simply and naturally they would come to spend a few moments in prayer in their Father's House. They would bring their joys, too, as well as their sorrows. Here thanks are given on a birthday or other anniversary. All the events of personal and family life are intertwined with the Church. This is to find our home in God's House. How often the words of a familiar hymn or prayer, saturated with the associations of home, comfort or strengthen us in distance and danger! On a bad night in a ruined house in France in 1918, I was asked by a truck-driver to offer a prayer. In the dark I repeated, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen." Not only were the hallowed words peculiarly appropriate to our situation, but for the moment we were back at Evensong at home, strengthened and comforted.

Too few of us think of our responsibility for the maintenance of public wor-

ship. The war taught me a lesson in that. In an almost totally destroyed town, Ancemont on the Meuse, I found a little girl of twelve, who told me that when she could, she swept out the chancel of the shattered village church, put flowers on the broken altar, and repeated all the prayers of the service she could remember. With the shells falling in that almost deserted village, there seemed to me something inexpressibly fine in that child's maintaining, as best she could, the public worship of Almighty God. Which of us would be as faithful?

The acceptability of our worship will doubtless depend upon what we are. In religion we can never get away from personal character. It has been said that the fifteenth psalm gives the definition of a gentleman, a man who will not overreach nor take advantage of his fellow, who will sacrifice himself and who can be depended upon to the uttermost. It also describes the personal character from which alone the highest worship can proceed. When David brought to the Tabernacle in Je-

rusalem the Ark of the Covenant, the most sacred possession of the Hebrew Nation, the symbol of the presence of God, the question arose as to what kind of moral conduct was necessary for those among whom the Divine Presence had come to dwell. Then David wrote this song, from which certain words ring out, as "uncorrupt," "right," "truth," "lowly." Strong and fine words, all of them, and descriptive of the character of those who can offer the purest worship to God. That verse about the man who will not disappoint his neighbour, "though it were to his own hindrance," grips one, for it describes so concisely the readiness to sacrifice self, if need be. In the truest worship there is always this element of sacrifice, the offering of ourselves to God, our souls and bodies to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto him in union with the sacrifice of his Blessed Son. One Sunday in 1918 I celebrated the Holy Communion twice in the Cathedral of Verdun for our own troops with the permission and approval of the Roman Catholic Chaplain of the



Citadel. The long lines of men, officers and privates, knelt together on the broken floor. They were offering themselves to God before going into the trenches that night. For some of them it was doubtless their last communion on earth. The element of sacrifice was there. Long afterwards one of them sought me out and told me that he would always better understand what worship meant.

## X.

### SERVICE OF GOD.

“TO SERVE GOD” has a majestic, scriptural, stirring sound. It goes far back in the history of our race to dim altars and ancient edicts, and yet what phrase has more tremendous present meaning? It passes beyond the limits of earth to that redeemed and white-robed company, seen in the vision of St. John before the throne of God, having come out of great tribulation to serve him day and night in his temple. What three words of one syllable express a more sublime and imperative calling? What utter demand, what complete consecration breathe in their sound! Is there any farther-reaching requirement than that so simply and nobly stated by the Law-Giver: “to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul”?

Rev.  
VII. 13-15.

Deut.  
X. 12.

The service of God is so great a thing and takes so many forms, we can hope only to consider some of its characteristics and general spheres of action, seeking here for suggestion rather than definition.

We can never afford to forget that being, as well as doing, is a part of service. The building up of strong, lovely, godlike character is no selfish act. It is essential service of God, and there are few greater contributions we can make to our fellow men. It is in fact a very potent service, for it is possible even for a person who is absolutely helpless physically, to be the strongest force in his circle by sheer beauty of character. That has been felt and recognized over and over again. There are few of us who have not seen living illustrations of Milton's glorious line:

"They also serve who only stand and wait."

One cannot read on a gravestone the phrase, "a faithful servant of God," without a little thrill. The obligation to serve God is equalled only by its privilege. It is

I. Cor.  
VI. 15.

a favorite saying of St. Paul's that our bodies are the members of Christ, that is to say, living parts of him. If one take that conception and carry out the thought, one comes to this tremendous question: there is a work which the Christ wants to do in this world; are we, his hands, ready to do it? There is a message he wants given; are we, his feet, willing to carry it, and we, his lips, eager to deliver it? There are lost sheep he wants found; are we, his eyes, carefully searching the shadows? To be permitted to act as Christ's representatives is a great thought, but to serve as his members is sublime. It means to go where he would go, to see as he would see, to do what he would do, to say what he would say, to be what he is.

II.  
St. Peter  
I. 4.

What must be the quality of the service of God? A conception of religion dear to Lyman Abbott was "the life of God in the soul of man." We Christians take into our human nature something of the nature of God, become, as St. Peter phrased it, "partakers of his divine nature." What is God's nature like? An outstand-

ing fact about God is that he is always giving. He gives of himself. He gave his Only-Begotten Son. He gives his Holy Spirit. Some things in his universe are like him in this. The sun is always giving of its light and heat. Radium is constantly throwing off its energy. The difference is that God is personal and inexhaustible. Eternal giving is one of his characteristics. It should also be characteristic of his children. The Bishop of London, Dr. Winnington-Ingram, once pointed out to me that the many parks and squares of London are nearly all adorned with statues, and that these are, for the most part, statues of givers, of men and women who had had something to give to civilization. All Christian service is like that. We must express the divine nature in giving, giving of ourselves as our Father is always giving of himself.

There is an ancient medal, which bears a bullock standing between a plough and an altar, with this inscription: "Ready for either, for toil or sacrifice." That ought to be our attitude. All along the way

are men and women acting for their Divine Lord, constrained by their love for Christ to consecrated service. If you have ever lived with a true physician, known him called out in the storm and night, watched him wrestle with pain, disease, and death, seen him in the morning worn and tired, you will have seen the service of God. If you have ever lived with a true lawyer, seen him burdened with care and responsibility, weighed down with the weight of a wrong not his own, worn in the fight for another's right, spending himself that justice be done and righteousness prevail in this world, you will have seen the service of God.

In Bishop Wordsworth's Commentary it is pointed out that in ancient days, when men wrote their letters, and especially is this true of those addressed to the Roman people, it was their custom to begin with a recitation of their own titles, as Rulers, Kings, or Conquerors; and so did the Apostles. But the title which the Apostles claimed was bondsmen or servants of Jesus Christ. Is there any finer title in the



world? Is there any that denotes a more royal condition? In the Collect for Peace in the Book of Common Prayer is this phrase: "Whose service is perfect freedom"; but in the Latin the words are, "*Cui servire, regnare est,*" Whom to serve is to be a king!

So must we all work to bring in the kingdom of God, both in ourselves and in all the earth, both in the present and in the future. To work for the universal reign of truth and peace and righteousness; to strive to bring about a state of society free from all impurities, nations unbound from selfish aims, a world full of faith and light and trust and love;—can there be any call more stirring than that to the service of God? It must move our hearts to the depths even to think of this earth as the perfect kingdom of God! To strive for that fulfillment is what his service means. "Thy kingdom come!"

## XI.

### SPHERES OF SERVICE.

IT IS HIDEOUS to think of all the foul abominations and blackguardly wrongs that beslime and defile this earth. Such thought gives to our conception of the service of God a certain militant temper. There is a grim and monstrous mass of evil to be attacked, and yet there must be constructive as well as destructive work. Indeed the labour that produces will be in general more effective than the effort which destroys, for our great hope is to overcome the evil with the good. The whole must be leavened. The three measures of meal in which the woman hid the leaven, suggest to us three main fields of service: our own lives, our own homes, and the world outside. It will repay us to

consider some of these spheres in some detail.

I. Home. Examine our Saviour's words and see how often he speaks of the home. Many of his illustrations are drawn from home life. It is not strange that this is so when we remember that the family is the basis of human society, and the home the unit of civilization. Our home ought to be the abode of joy, tranquillity, confidence, and love. There may be some dust there, some disorder and want of repair. Such things mar, but they are not so disfiguring as suspicion, jealousy, misunderstanding, and deception. Joy makes for health, and so does tranquillity. How can these be where there are explosions of temper, inconsiderateness, or selfishness? The derivation of the verb *to nag* is most illuminating. I used to think it came from the continual flicking of a lazy horse with the whip. Its real meaning is far worse than that. It comes from the Norwegian *nagga*, to gnaw, to wear down by little bites!

Happy conditions in the home cannot

prevail without much effort on somebody's part, nor anything like the ideal condition without striving on everybody's part. As in the highest worship, so especially in this form of service, is sacrifice a necessary element. Somewhere I have read that oftentimes, in the age of darkness, men slew a victim, a human being for choice, and buried him beneath the hearth, that his blood might propitiate the gods and bring good luck to the household. There are very few perfectly happy and joyous homes that are not built upon loving sacrifice. It is a solemn thought that perhaps the sacrifice of just one bad habit would make home blessed.

II. Business. Our Lord's early workplace, the carpenter shop, was close to, or a part of, his home. We may believe there was one standard for both. We all greatly dislike the expression "a double life," and yet the thing itself is much more frequent than we realize. In working in the slums of New York City, I once had some association with a Bowery tough, a gangster,

thug, and gunman. One day he took me to his home, and there, lo and behold, he was a gentle and considerate husband, and a loving and tender father! There are not many characters in fiction more attractive than the brothers Cheeryble, whether in their home or their counting house. Business has made great strides in righteousness, but it is not yet wholly Christianized.

We are sometimes inclined to think that the service of God must consist in something extraordinary, quite apart from "the common round, the trivial task." On the contrary, it usually lies in the ordinary business of life. The most commonplace job is dignified if it be done for the glory of God. Good old George Herbert put that once for all in the English tongue:

"A servant with this clause, makes drudgery  
divine."

What the work is, matters less than the spirit in which it is done. There is truth in that fine saying of Joseph Hall, Dean

of Worcester in the seventeenth century:

"God loveth adverbs; and cares not how good,  
but how well!"

III. Society. One cannot go long to school, or mingle in the society of one's fellows, without experiencing some rubs and slights. It is not easy for us human beings to live together. Take any community. What an appalling amount of heart-burning, disappointment, hurt feelings, grudges, bitternesses, quarrels, scandals, there is! Stop outside some school at recess time and watch children at their games. Notice how much of their play consists in quarrelling. When one thinks of the amount of untruth, profanity, obscenity, unkindness, snobbery, exaggeration, and backbiting there is, one realizes that in our social relationships there is a huge field for Christian service. So much of life has yet to be sweetened and made more wholesome, and not by ways that can be covered by a cheque. There is loneliness to be relieved; encouragement to be given; sympathy to be expressed; interest



to be shown; appreciation to be manifested; friendliness to be exhibited. We can never forget St. Peter's description of our Lord as one "who went about doing good." Acts  
X. 38.

Sometimes we recognize our duty toward individuals and fail to realize our responsibility for the whole of human society. We are not isolated units but all closely linked together. There is a striking text in the Old Testament, which speaks of a soul as bound in the bundle of life with the Lord its God. Our religion teaches us that we are bound not only to God but to all mankind. Love, one to another, was declared by our Lord to be a sign of his discipleship. St. Paul spoke of us as "every one members one of another." How very modern St. Paul often is! All recent science emphasizes the solidarity of mankind. The ultimate goal of our service must be the transformation, not only of the individual, but of all social relationships. Read St. Augustine or write for yourself a new Tale of Two Cities; the City of the World, built upon I. Sam.  
XXV. 29.  
  
St. John  
XIII. 35.  
  
Rom.  
XII. 5.

a false basis, the city of selfishness; and the City of God, the holy city, the city which hath foundations of righteousness and truth, whose builder and maker is God, and in the building of which we must be his workmen.

IV. Public Life. A recent article in a magazine raised the question as to what were the seven present wonders of the world, and one discerning correspondent maintained that one of them was certainly the foul slums which we allow to exist. That thought is appalling enough, but when one thinks of the tragedies enacted in houses with smug and respectable fronts, the horror deepens. Suppose all those fronts were shorn off. Browning has pictured such a house:

“The whole of the frontage shaven sheer,  
The inside gaped: exposed to day,  
Right and wrong and common and queer,  
Bare, as the palm of your hand, it lay.”

If we actually saw some of the things that are going on, we should be far more active about good government and all the agencies for the betterment of life, be-

cause we should know that some of the evils can only be dealt with by governmental action and organized endeavour.

What a need there is for the service of the best men and women in the business of government! Every voter can try to serve God in his suffrage, and it can mean more than a designation when he marks his ballot with a cross. The holding of an office, the being a director or trustee, membership in a committee or on a board, all these can be made the service of God. Opportunities for his service abound: in the field of education, to make it more Christian; in city-planning, to produce healthy, sanitary, beautiful cities; in rural work; in the industrial world; in all the philanthropies and welfare organizations. In all such activities, one may see an element of religion, a way to serve God.

V. The Church. The name of every one who becomes a member of the Christian Church adds statistically to its numerical strength. The personal problem before every such person is, how to make his membership in the Church really count.

If only every member of Christ's Church were persistently in earnest to make himself count for as much as possible, the world would soon be a very different place. If a man address himself to this problem, he soon discovers that it is possible to make himself of value in the Church in two ways, as an individual and as a member.

Gal.  
II. 20.

It is in union with God that the individual counts most. Few, if any, individuals have counted for more in this world than St. Paul, who described his own life as the living presence of Christ in him. When this eager missionary became a prisoner, chained to a Roman soldier, unable to travel about and do the work he so longed to do, he still made himself count. Who can measure the impression he made upon those guards to whom he was chained, a fresh one every day? So the knowledge of the Christ was spread through the Praetorian Guard and the Imperial Household. The force of this man penetrated through every barrier and obstacle. Imagine the difference that

the presence of such a man would make in a congregation!

How can one make himself count as an individual in the Church? The fact of a stainless life counts for much. Regular and devout worship counts for much. Both are strong witnesses to God. But every individual in the Christian Church needs to have some first-hand part in the work of the Church. To teach, to visit, to administer, to bear the brightness of God into the shadows, to apply one's strength in comforting and helping, such things call for personal service. Many a man feels that he ought to do more of such immediate work; but what he as often fails to recognize is that he must usually find his place in it for himself. He must seek his opportunity.

Perhaps more men make themselves of value in service in the Church as individuals than through their membership in it. It is here that so many fall short, and it is natural that they should, for membership demands a certain kind of self-surrender. One of the most famous military

formations in history is the Macedonian phalanx, which contributed so largely to the conquests of Alexander. In that close array every man counted in the united strength. Each contributed to the whole. There had to be discipline and there had to be loyalty. There had to be the merging of the individual into the body. There had to be united action at the right moment. If, in our Church membership, there were the same surrender of prominence, and yet the same coöperation; the same acceptance of discipline, and yet the same recognition of responsibility; the same loyalty and *esprit de corps*; the same united action at the right time; the conquests by Christ would be vastly extended.

Especially are we apt to underrate the possibilities of membership in a small body, let us say a weak congregation. After all it is the small group that has brought about most of the great things. Bethlehem was little among the thousands of Judah. Good things come out of Na-



zareth. Our Lord chose but a small band to carry on his work.

It is through our membership that we can all take part in the great work the Church is doing in spreading the kingdom of truth and mercy. If we can only love and serve the Church as Christ loved it and gave himself for it, conventional Christianity will disappear. If we can only see in it his kingdom of beauty and light and power, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," our service of God will be transformed.

Eph.  
V. 25.

Cant.  
VI. 10.

## XII.

### OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS RELIGION.

OUR ATTITUDE has been left to the last chapter, although it would seem in many ways properly to have come in the first. The fact is it might relevantly come in either, for, not only is our conception of religion in part determined by our attitude, but our attitude towards religion also grows out of what we believe religion to be; and it is desirable to place the consideration of this subject here, that we may leave the final emphasis upon it.

Attitude is always important, for so much depends upon how we face anything. In every principal art and sport, the first thing taught is how to hold oneself in approaching the matter. To begin in a wrong attitude is to handicap all future progress. Not only to him who is going to practise,

is faulty attitude detrimental; but in this case it is harmful to the cause of religion itself. There are unquestionably some reasonably devout people, who fulfil in large measure all their obligations to religion except in their general attitude toward it. To some it appears to be a jest; to some a bore; to some a puzzle; to some an irksome duty; to some a continuing cry like that of the daughters of the horseleach, Give, Give! The pecuniary obligations, which happily cannot be wholly divorced from the practice of religion, so oppress some that they would amend the words of Agur, the son of Jakeh, in his list of the four things that are never satisfied, the grave, the barren womb, the parched earth, and the fire, by adding to them, the Church.

Prov.  
XXX. 15

Prov.  
XXX. 15,  
16.

To those who love religion, nothing is more refreshing than to meet a person whose whole attitude towards it is full of enthusiasm, appreciation, and reverence; to which one may add also, of common sense and breadth. On the other hand, everyone who is truly interested in religion is distressed at times by meeting pious

folk who take an earnest but extremely narrow view of it. Their standpoint seems necessarily to give only a partial aspect of the whole. If they could change their attitude, their whole field of vision would enlarge. If religion be universal, it will not do to regard it only toward one point of the compass. To see it aright, one must strive to get at the heart of it, to stand at the centre and look around the complete circle.

I. Kings  
VII. 25.

When King Solomon brought Hiram out of Tyre to work for him in brass, among the things made was a molten sea, whose dimensions and decorations are fully described in the First Book of the Kings: "It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea was set above upon them." In that molten sea is a symbol of religion.

There must be the northerly look. There are stern aspects to religion. The Gospel has its severe side, its stringent

exactions, its uncompromising requirements. Even the gentle voice of the Saviour has its austere tones. His condemnations are solemn and emphatic. The "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God," Duty, wears a peremptory look. "It must needs be!" sounds in our ears. Our Lord's own obligations were paramount. "He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem." "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up." The shadow of the Cross lay always before him. To lose sight of the rigour of religion is to have a Christianity without the Cross. Religion is a stern thing, at times a bleak thing, lonely and exposed. It was so to our Lord in his desolation on the Cross. We must look at it toward the north.

St. Luke  
IX. 51.

St. John  
XVIII. 11.

St. John  
III. 14

But to look only toward the north is to have a partial view. The oxen that looked toward the west looked out toward new empires and new civilizations, in the direction that has meant progress in the world. It was a beautiful outlook, too, at the western sky, full at evening of mellow

light, glowing tones, and golden borders, seeming to gild with radiance that which lies beyond the horizon's rim, and to yield glimpses of the lifting up of the everlasting doors and the entrance of the King of Glory. We must look at religion as progressive, as going on from strength to strength. We must see in it a universal thing, larger than our own parish, a thing meant for all men everywhere, always, and never cease to pray and to work for the coming of God's Kingdom, for the time when "all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall do him service." We must behold in religion a heavenly thing, a holy thing, one end of which rests indeed upon the earth, but which, like the ladder of Jacob's vision, reaches to heaven.

Ps.  
LXXII. 11.

Nor must we neglect the southerly view. The south, as we commonly know it, stands to us for perennial verdure, for luxuriance of foliage, for the colourful richness of vegetation, for warmth and bloom and plenitude. Religion must appear in our eyes a sublime thing, having



all the elements of beauty. We must not fear to put into it all the grace and glory and comeliness that we can, just so long as its setting serves to reveal, and not to obscure, the splendour of God. We must find in it comfort, warmth, flavour, nourishment, the bread of life which cometh down from heaven.

St. John  
VI. 35, 41.

All this, even, would be incomplete unless we look also toward the east. There is the renewal of light, the faithful return of the sun, the daily resurrection, the rising of the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings, the rise of the glory of the Lord. We must see in our religion hope, the strongest hope for ourselves and for the world, the absolute confidence in the ultimate triumph of the Lord of hosts, the Lord sitting above the water-flood and the Lord remaining a King for ever.

Mal.  
IV. 2

Isa.  
LX. 1.

Ps.  
XXIX. 9.

The attitude of each group of oxen is significant, and yet the molten sea was set "above upon them." Each of these aspects of religion is essential, and yet religion is above them all. The molten sea rests upon these outlooks to catch and con-

Rev.  
XXII. 1.

serve for us “the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

## REFERENCES.

- 1 Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defence of Poesy*.
- 2 *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act IV., Scene 4.
- 3 *De Natura Deorum*, II., 28.
- 4 *Inst. Div.* IV., 28.
- 5 *De Vera Religione*, XLI., 55.
- 6 Liddon's *Some Elements of Religion*, p. 18.
- 7 *A Study of Religion*, I., 15.
- 8 Referred to in *Some Elements of Religion*, p. 16, as quoted in Luthardt, *Apologetische Vorträge*, I., 6.
- 9 Schleiermacher, *Christliche Glaube*, I., pp. 6-14, quoted in Liddon's *Some Elements of Religion*, footnote on p. 9.
- 10 *Literature and Dogma*, I., 20.
- 11 *Grammar of Assent*, p. 378.
- 12 Page 345.
- 13 Notes on Lectures.
- 14 Notes on Lectures.
- 15 *Some Elements of Religion*, pp. 20, 21.
- 16 Geo. McDonald, *The Marquis of Lossie*.
- 17 Page 234.
- 18 *Plain Words*, Second Series, pp. 230-1.
- 19 I., p. 39. Quoted in Birkbeck Hill's edition of Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, footnote on p. 70.
- 20 P. T. Forsyth, quoted in *Prayers for the City of God*, p. 46.
- 21 *Some Elements of Religion*, p. 14.
- 22 *The Faith of the Gospel*, p. 19.
- 23 *Creative Prayer*, by E. Herman, p. 20.
- 24 *Creative Prayer*, p. 102.
- 25 *First-Hand Religion*, by Arthur Chandler, p. 9.
- 26 Page. 68.
- 27 *Personal Religion and Public Righteousness*, p. 27.

PRINTED IN  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
BY  
MOREHOUSE PUBLISHING CO.  
MILWAUKEE, WIS.







Davies, T. F.

242.35

D289

c.2

Personal progress in religion

242.35

D289

c.2



S0-BYL-851

